

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 ACDA-05 OMB-01 SAM-01 /093 W

----- 122939

R 220805Z DEC 75

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8477

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 15029

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR IN CH

SUBJECT: SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

REF: (A) NEW DELHI 16716 (B) NEW DELHI 16768

(C) NEW DELHI 6138 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: WE BELIEVE VARIOUS PRC ACTIONS EARLY IN 1975 WERE SERIOUSLY CALCULATED TO ELICIT A FAVORABLE INDIAN RESPONSE TO IMPROVEMENT OF SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS. LACK OF AN INDIAN RESPONSE AT THAT TIME AND SUBSEQUENT EVENTS IN INDIA TO WHICH PEKING FELT OBLIGED TO RESPOND PUBLICLY SET BACK ANY HOPE THAT IMPROVEMENT COULD BE MADE THIS YEAR. THUS, FOR PEKING, SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS ARE ON THE BACK BURNER AND LIKELY TO REMAIN THAT WAY UNLESS THE INDIANS TAKE SOME POSITIVE INITIATIVE, ALTHOUGH THE PRC WILL PROBABLY SEEK TO TEST THE WATERS FROM TIME TO TIME. END SUMMARY

1. REF A INDICATING THAT INDIAN FONSEC HAD MADE AN
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APPROACH TO PRC CHARGE IN NEW DELHI ON BASIS OF JANUARY

PRC PING-PONG TEAM VISIT AND FEBRUARY STOPOVER IN CALCUTTA
BY PRC POLITBURO MEMBER CHEN HSI-LIEN SURPRISED US. WE
GREATLY APPRECIATE CLARIFICATION IN REF B INDICATING
THAT INDIAN APPROACH CAME ONLY IN AUGUST AFTER CONSIDERABLE
TIME AND NUMBER OF EVENTS HAD PASSED. WE BELIEVE THAT PRC
HAD A DEFINITE INTEREST IN BETTERMENT OF SINO-INDIAN
RELATIONS EARLY IN 1975 AND WOULD HAVE BEEN QUITE PREPARED
AT THAT TIME FOR SOME SORT OF INDIAN RESPONSE.

2. IN JANUARY, THE WARMTH OF THE GREETING PROVIDED TO THE
PRC PING PONG TEAM IN CALCUTTA PROBABLY DIRECTLY ENCOURAGED
POLITBURO MEMBER CHEN HSI-LIEN'S FORTHCOMING COMMENTS IN
CALCUTTA THE FOLLOWING MONTH ON HIS WAY TO THE NEPALESE
CORONATION. OTHER FAVORABLE SIGNALS FROM THE PRC HAD
BEEN THE LARGE CHINESE TURNOUT AT THE INDIAN CHARGE'S
NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION IN PEKING AND REPORTS THAT SENIOR
PRC VICE FOREIGN MINISTER HAN NEIN-LUNG HAD SPENT A LONG
PERIOD IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH THE CHARGE. THERE
APPEARED TO BE NO INDIAN RESPONSE AT THAT TIME. THE PING
PONG TEAM WENT ON TO NEW DELHI BUT ATTRACTED ONLY LOW-LEVEL
ATTENTION DESPITE CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION THAT
MRS. GANDHI WOULD PERSONALLY RECIEVE THEM.

3. MOREOVER, SUBSEQUENT EVENTS RAPIDLY DIMINISHED THE
POSSIBILITY THAT THE RELATIONSHIP COULD BE REKINDLED SO
READILY. THE PRC LEADERSHIP APPARENTLY FELT OBLIGED
TO PROTEST PUBLICLY THE INDIAN ACCORD ON KASHMIR
IN MARCH, THE FINAL ANNEXATION OF SIKKIM IN APRIL, THE
DOMESTIC INDIAN POLITICAL PROBLEMS DURING THE SUMMER,
AND FINALLY THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER CLASH ON OCTOBER 20.
FOR THE MOST PART, HOWEVER, THE CHINESE REACTION WAS
RELATIVELY RESTRAINED WITH THE MOST VITRIOLIC COMMENTS
BEING THE PERSONAL CRITICISM (HK 7377) OF MRS. GANDHI
FOLLOWING THE INSTITUTION OF EMERGENCY POWERS IN INDIA.
PERHAPS THIS WAS BASED ON A CHINESE MISCALCULATION THAT
MRS. GANDHI HAD OVERPLAYED HER DOMESTIC HAND AND WAS
ENGAGED IN A LAST DITCH, AND LOSING, STRUGGLE. AT ANY
RATE, EACH OF THESE ISSUES HAD A DIRECT BEARING EITHER ON
PEKING'S OWN SECURITY CONCERNS OR ON THOSE OF CHINA'S
PRINCIPAL ALLY IN SOUTHASIA, PAKISTAN.

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4. THE CHINESE RESPONSE TO THESE EVENTS WAS REQUIRED,
PREDICTABLE, AND, IN THE CHINESE VIEW, PROBABLY SHOULD
HAVE BEEN ANTICIPATED IN ADVANCE BY THE INDIANS. THE
PRC MEDIA, HOWEVER, HAS PASSED UP MANY OTHER OPPORTUNITIES
CONDEMN INDIAN ACTIONS AND, ESPECIALLY IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS,
HAS AVOIDED UNNECESSARY CRITICISM OF INDIA. CERTAINLY,
WHATEVER THE BACKGROUND OF THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER CLASH,

THE PRC RESPONDED ONLY AFTER THE AFFAIR HAD BEEN MADE PUBLIC BY THE GOI AND THEN IMMEDIATELY DROPPED THE MATTER.

3. IN OUR VIEW, THE CURRENT SINO-INDIAN RELATIONSHIP IS BASED LARGELY UPON MUTUAL SUSPICION COUPLED WITH GREAT DOSES OF SKEPTICISM ON BOTH SIDES. THE CHINESE WORRY CONSTANTLY OVER THE AMOUNT OF SOVIET INFLUENCE IN INDIAN POLICIES AND OFTEN VIEW INDIA AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE SOVIET ATTEMPT TO ENCIRCLE CHINA. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CHINESE HAVE APPEARED TO BELITTLE INDIAN'S ROLE AS THE MAJOR REGIONAL POWER IN SOUTH ASIA, CONTINUED THEIR STRONG SUPPORT FOR INDIA'S MAJOR ANTAGONIST PAKISTAN, AND HAVE STEADILY ADVANCED THEIR OWN POSITION AS INDIAN INFLUENCE HAS WANED IN BANGLADESH.

4. BASICALLY, HOWEVER, WE WOULD BELIEVE THAT THE CHINESE ARE INTERESTED IN IMPROVING THEIR INDIAN RELATIONSHIP ALTHOUGH THEY ARE UNWILLING TO MAKE ANY IMPORTANT CHINESE CONCESSIONS TO GAIN THIS GOAL. WITH TYPICAL CHINESE PATIENCE, THEY AWAIT THE INDIAN RETURN OF AN AMBASSADOR TO PEKING AND WOULD PROBABLY RECIPROCATATE WITHIN A FEW MONTHS. THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO DISCUSS THE BORDER ISSUE AND WOULD PROBABLY BE FORTHCOMING IN MOST BORDER AREAS BUT THEY WOULD CERTAINLY NOT CONTEMPLATE GIVING UP THE HARD-BUILT ROAD LINKING SINKIANG AND TIBET. THE PRC WOULD ALSO PROBABLY CONSIDER THE PROBLEM OF PRC ASSISTANCE TO THE NAGAS IN THE SAME TERMS THAT THEY DO SUCH ASSISTANCE TO SOUTHEAST ASIAN INSURGENCY GROUPS -- "WE SUPPORT BUT DO NOT EXPORT REVOLUTION" -- AND CONTINUE RIGHT ON WITH WHATEVER THEIR PRESENT LEVEL OF SUPPORT MAY BE.
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6. FOR THE PRC, THE ADVANTAGES OF A LIMITED RAPPROCHEMENT WITH INDIA WOULD LARGELY BE THE EFFECT WHICH SUCH A MOVE MIGHT HAVE ON INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS. THE CHINESE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY HOPE THAT SINO-INDIAN IMPROVEMENT WOULD BE LOOKED UPON WITH DISFAVOR BY THE SOVIETS AND CAUSE STRAINS BETWEEN INDIA AND THE USSR. THUS, WE WOULD ASSUME THAT PEKING WILL CONTINUE FROM TIME TO TIME TO MAKE ENCOURAGING NOISES IN NEW DELHI'S DIRECTION. THERE IS NO SENSE OF IMPATIENCE ON THIS ISSUE IN CHINA, HOWEVER, AND GIVEN WHAT THE CHINESE PROBABLY BELIEVE WAS AN INDIAN REBUFF TO THEIR OVERTURES EARLY THIS YEAR, WE WOULD NOT ANTICIPATE ANY MAJOR PRC INITIATIVES TOWARDS NEW DELHI. RATHER, WE WOULD CONSIDER THAT PEKING IS PROBABLY WAITING FOR SOME

SIGNALS FROM DELHI.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975HONGK15029
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750443-0987
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751220/aaaaaqxc.tel
Line Count: 171
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 NEW DELHI 16716, 75 NEW DELHI 16768
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <30 OCT 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, IN, CH
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006